



Diamond Comic Distributors (DCD) requires that all items submitted for inclusion in DCD's *Previews* monthly solicitation catalog be distributed to direct market retailers with a machine-readable bar code printed on, or otherwise affixed to, the outside of the product. This change was in response to the rapidly growing number of stores relying upon point of sale (POS) software using bar code scanners that identify, stock, record sales, and order product.

All new comics submitted for solicitation in *Previews* must be assigned, and subsequently ship, bearing a 12 digit UPC-A code with a 5 digit supplement provided by the publisher. Comic books may not ship with additional ISBN and EAN information on the bar code. The UPC-A number and series supplement will replace the use of other scannable bar code data. Due to varying shelving/display habits by retailers, we recommend that ALL comics have the barcode printed on the front cover whenever possible.

Formatting a Comic UPC

Publishers will be able to save the cost of buying many individual UPC code blocks by assigning a single bar code to a series of comic books, using the same root UPC for the entire series, and simply changing the 5 digit supplement to uniquely identify each issue/version of the book. For example: *Captain Previews* #1 through #5 would each have the same root UPC-A code identifier with a unique 5 digit supplement that identifies the issues, variants, and printings within that series.

The five digit supplement is formatted as follows:

- The first 3 digits are the issue number.
- The 4th digit is the variant number. (Sequential for each variant edition produced.)
- And the 5th digit denotes which printing of the book, should the publisher go back to press.

For this example comic series *WHAM BANG COMICS*, the UPC remains 761941200194 throughout the series, but the supplement changes based on the issue number, variant edition and additional printings: (see below)

TITLE / ISSUE #	UPC BASE	UPC SUPPLEMENT
WHAM BANG COMICS #1	761941200194	00111
WHAM BANG COMICS #2 cover A	761941200194	00211
WHAM BANG COMICS #2 cover B	761941200194	00221
WHAM BANG COMICS #2 incentive cover C	761941200194	00231
WHAM BANG COMICS #2 second printing	761941200194	00212

UPC Generation Tools

Information about standards and procedures for obtaining UPC bar codes can be obtained from GS1 US (formerly the Uniform Code Council) at <http://www.uc-council.org>.

UPC bar codes can also be obtained through one of the following authorized UPC resellers:

- <http://www.UPCcode.us>
- <http://www.buyabarcodes.com>
- <http://www.upcexpress.com>
- <http://www.legalbarcodes.com>

Below are a few examples of UPC software to get you started:

1. <http://www.easybarcodetech.com/ebc.html?gclid=CIDPh137q6ECFRkcswodjElfEA>
\$128, single use license. This program is very basic, but it appears to get the job done.

2. <http://www.itsapparent.com/>
\$250 single use license. This program has more functionality than the one above and gives more bang for the buck.
3. <http://www.finelinetech.com/index.php?page=symart-8>
If you create the full array of code types, SymArt 8 Pro is the full version for \$1,495.00.
SymArt Express, used just to make UPC / EAN's is \$495.00.
Other specialty codes such as Datamatrix or GS1 Databar are add-on's for \$995.00.

At DCD's sole discretion, items received without a properly formatted, valid, and scannable bar code will be either returned to the vendor, or corrected at the DCD warehouse. Correcting a bar code typically requires having the books individually bagged and a new bar code sticker affixed to the bag (so as not to damage the comic). Comics with incorrect bar codes will be assessed a "bar code infraction" fee of \$150.00 per sku/per shipment as well as an additional \$0.40 per unit to cover expenses associated with the bags and stickers (both fees subject to future increases). Distribution of items which arrive without valid bar codes (and are not returned to the vendor) may be delayed up to three weeks before shipping to retailers.

Barcode example for a typical comic book.



FAQ

Q – I print ISBN's and EANs on my trade paperbacks, why can't I put an ISBN/EAN on my comics?

A – A comic, defined as a serial publication, does not get an ISBN allocated. ISBN's are assigned to books only. The standard UPC format explained above helps Diamond and the retailer accurately identify each issue within a series. Retailers can use this UPC to search for other issues within the same series when placing orders.

Q – Can I re-use my UPC number for a different series once a series is finished and out of print?

A – NO. Diamond and its retailers make business decisions based upon historical data and the re-use of a 12 digit UPC number eliminates the integrity of that data. It also causes confusion with point of sale (POS) systems by creating conflict between previous product records and newly offered items.

Q - How do I test my barcode to make sure I won't have a problem?

A – You may elect to email your brand manager a high resolution graphic of your bar code and he/she will have someone at DCD's home office scan the code to make sure it successfully identifies your book.

Q - My first shipment of a comic book had an incorrect bar code and now I must ship another batch of the same comic book to Diamond. What should I do?

A – Every shipment of every comic book MUST have the correct bar code on it. You may choose to bag and sticker the books yourself prior to shipping them or remind your brand manager of the bar code concern prior to shipping so your brand manager can begin preparing to bag and sticker the books upon arrival. If you alert your brand manager of the concern PRIOR to shipping, you can avoid future "bar code infraction" fees on the same comic book.

If you have any further questions about this policy, or require additional, please contact your Diamond Purchasing Brand Manager.